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Monday, 15 November 1993
at 3 p.m.

NEW YORK

President: Mr. INSANALLY
(Guyana)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 32

COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES FROM THE TERRITORIES OF THE BALTIC STATES

(a) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/48/501)

(b) DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/48/L.17/Rev.2)

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia, His Excellency Mr. Valdis Birkavs, in the course of which he will introduce draft resolution A/48/L.17/Rev.2.

Mr. Valdis Birkavs, Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The PRESIDENT: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia, His Excellency Mr. Valdis Birkavs, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. BIRKAVS: The draft resolution that I have the honour to introduce addresses the most important and urgent matter now confronting Latvia and the other Baltic States: the continued illegal presence of the military forces of the Russian Federation on the territories of Latvia and Estonia.

The matter of the complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territories of the Baltic States is being discussed by the General Assembly at the same time as the Republic of Latvia is celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Declaration of its independence. The State of Latvia was proclaimed in 1918, and by 1920 it was recognized by the world community. When celebrating an anniversary like this, every nation remembers the severe battles it had to fight in order to gain and protect its independence. The realization that every effort will be made to retain this independence becomes more acute.

Unfortunately, following the period of growth and well-being before the Second World War, the Baltic States and their peoples were tried in a very severe way. At the beginning of the 1940s, as a result of an agreement between two totalitarian Powers, the independence of the Baltic States was lost, and for 50 years independence was only a dream. The actions of their peoples, the end of the cold war and the collapse of communism gave the three Baltic States the opportunity to re-establish their independence. We immediately embraced that opportunity and restored our independence in 1991.

Many representatives know that only after the establishment of independence in their own countries did the most difficult period of their development begin. Since the re-establishment of our independence in 1991 much has been achieved. However, much remains to be done. We have to strengthen our independence and make every effort to ensure that we never lose it again. Our efforts are made especially difficult by the presence of foreign military forces stationed on our territory without our consent.

I believe that this audience in particular, containing so many representatives of States which gained their

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independence quite recently, understands how important sovereignty is to every nation. To secure it, we have to overcome many obstacles. The main obstacle to successful development and the most potent factor of instability in the Baltic region still remains the presence of Russian troops on the territory of two sovereign States, Latvia and Estonia. The removal of this problem from Lithuania is a positive development. However, the last 3,000 troops that recently departed from Lithuania represented only 12 per cent of the total of Russian Federation troop strength in the Baltic States. Since the Soviet Baltic military district was headquartered in Latvia, my country had the heaviest troop concentration of all three States.

The present Russian Federation North-West Military Area Group still has its headquarters in Riga and retains control over 22 intelligence and counter-intelligence units, 211 military facilities, including air and naval installations, and over 96,000 hectares of the territory of Latvia. Of over 18,000 Russian military personnel stationed in Latvia, about one half are officers.

In terms of sheer numbers, fewer troops have been removed from Lithuania and Poland, and, eventually, will have been removed from Estonia, than remain based in Latvia.

I should like to detail the efforts made by my country to deal with the situation of foreign military forces stationed on its territory without its consent. Latvia has been seeking a reasonable solution to this problem through bilateral negotiations. After our parliamentary elections in June of this year, the first - and I stress, the first - order of business was the formation of a new delegation to the negotiations. Two rounds of talks have already taken place, and the third round is under way at this very moment in Jurmala, Latvia. Having solved a number of technical or secondary removal-associated problems, both parties have exhausted the limits of compromise without reaching agreement on three fundamental issues: the early, orderly and complete withdrawal of Russian Federation military forces from our territory.

In spite of General Assembly resolution 47/21, adopted on 25 November 1992, and paragraph 15 of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) "Helsinki Document 1992 - the Challenges of Change" and in spite of calls by many Governments for the early, orderly and complete withdrawal of Russian Federation troops, there has not been significant progress on the part of the Russian Federation in fulfilling these requirements. In fact, the Russian Federation has put forward several conditions and acted in contradiction to the requirements of - again, I must stress - an early, orderly and complete withdrawal.

First, a year after the adoption of resolution 47/21 on this issue, an agreement on troop withdrawal has yet to be signed; thus, the requirement for an early withdrawal has not been respected. Secondly, although some forces have departed, an inspection of vacated military facilities in Latvia, revealing ransacked buildings and rusting hulks, demonstrates that withdrawal has not been orderly. Thirdly, the requirement that withdrawal be complete has been subverted by the Russian Federation's demands to maintain some facilities in Latvia until the turn of the century.

The Russian Federation has demanded social guarantees for its retired military personnel and housing for its military personnel withdrawn from Latvia. Recent statements by the Russian Federation's Minister of Defence demonstrate that the Russian Federation could again resort to the so-called human-rights issue in order to halt troop withdrawal from Latvia and Estonia. The use of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia and Estonia as a tool to achieve political or military-political goals in fact puts the Russian-speaking population in the position of hostages, benefiting neither party.

Another difficult issue on the negotiations agenda is the question of the so-called strategic facilities which the Russian Federation is seeking to keep in Latvia for many years. This issue is burdened, in part, by the negative historical experience of the people of Latvia. These "strategic" facilities are perceived as military bases which could once again serve as a pretext for the occupation of Latvia, as was the case in 1940. Latvia will extend the deadline for the relocation of these facilities only if real international security guarantees and a reasonably tight internationally controlled schedule for relocation are given. We categorically reject the Russian Federation's request to maintain these facilities for an extended period of time. However, within the boundaries I have just mentioned, we are willing to compromise.

Rhetoric regarding the Russian-speaking population and the desire to retain some military facilities leaves room for doubt as to whether the Russian Federation has the political will to remove its troops from Latvia. This gives the impression that the Russian Federation still wants to keep its military presence in the region.

Clearly, Latvia cannot solve all its problems by itself, and it depends greatly on the involvement and support of the international community. Just as clear is the acknowledgment that no State can expect the international community to solve all of its problems. But can the mouse be expected to conduct bilateral negotiations with the cat on the subject of the removal of the mousetrap?

In this respect, we believe that the repeated adoption of General Assembly resolutions on this issue will reassure us about the sincerity of the Russian Federation's intentions and will help Russian leaders adopt a political decision which would solve once and for all the issue of the withdrawal of Russian Federation troops in the Baltic States.

More weight will be attached to these resolutions if they are adopted by consensus. It is our hope that the Russian Federation will effectively pursue the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/21, the draft resolution now under consideration and the CSCE Helsinki Document.

We are well aware of all the difficulties the Russian Federation is confronting in its efforts to build democracy after long years of totalitarian rule. Latvia supports the ongoing democratic processes in the Russian Federation. However, none of Russia's problems or difficulties can be solved at the expense of the independence or statehood of its neighbours.

The United Nations is an Organization entrusted by its Member States with the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. Though the main responsibility in this field rests on the Security Council, the General Assembly has its own competence as well, and it has been successful in exercising it, especially when possible steps by the Security Council towards international peace and security were hindered by the cold war between the super-Powers.

Now that the cold war and the bipolarity of the world have ended, contradictions between the big Powers no longer constitute the main threat to peace and security in the world. The security of small States gradually comes to the foreground. These States are particularly interested in strengthening the international security institutions and making the most effective use of them.

The nature of conflicts in the modern world has changed; hence, the instruments for dealing with them have changed as well. Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, has rightly pointed out that the most desirable and efficient use of diplomacy is to ease tensions before they result in conflict.

Ironically, the use of preventive diplomacy is not always rewarding. If it succeeds, there may not be demonstrative results, while, if it fails, the conflicts which emerge attract the attention of the world. The removal of the Russian Federation troops from the Baltic States can serve as a good example of preventive diplomacy in action, yielding evident results. Measures taken within the United Nations framework, in particular resolution 47/21, have been a notable contribution, as a result of which the Russian Federation has completely pulled its troops out of Lithuania.

If a flight from Riga, Latvia, to New York takes nine hours, should not the return flight from New York to Riga take nine hours as well? When one ponders this question, it must be remembered that in 1940 Soviet troops, in gross violation of international law, entered and occupied the free, independent Baltic States in a matter of days. Since Moscow had clearly formulated its decision to occupy the Baltic States, the Army had no practical or technical difficulties in implementing its plan. However, now that 50 years have elapsed, it is high time to do away with the consequences of this gross violation of international law. It appears that two years have not been enough to remove the troops or even to agree upon the time by which they will be removed.

But, in fact, that is time for decision. We thank the Secretary-General for his efforts to implement resolution 47/21. The appointment of a Special Envoy, Ambassador Tommy Koh of Singapore, who headed a good-offices mission to the Baltic States and the Russian Federation, led to greater international understanding of this issue. The good-offices mission was of the type envisaged by the Secretary-General in his report "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277) and should serve as an example of cooperation and early prevention enhancing transparency and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

However, the Member States and the international community should not stop there; the process of early prevention must continue. We urge the Russian Federation, the other Member States and the international community to continue to work toward the early, orderly and complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territories of Latvia and Estonia - for early prevention, for regional and international peace and security, and for justice.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Valdis Birkavs, Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Mr. OSVALD (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

The withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic countries is an issue of major importance. It will

substantiate the independence of the Baltic States and strengthen security and stability in the Baltic Sea region. More than a year has now elapsed since Russia made its commitment concerning a complete withdrawal of troops from the Baltic countries. It is more than two years since Russia recognized the re-established independence of the Baltic States.

The Nordic countries have regarded it as an important task to try to assist - together with other countries - in accelerating the withdrawal of Russian troops from the territories of the Baltic States. The demand for an early, orderly and complete withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic States - in accordance with the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) Helsinki Summit - still stands.

The continued stationing of foreign forces in the territory of independent States without their agreement is unacceptable. The Russian military forces in Estonia and Latvia have been reduced in numbers, but the remaining troops must be withdrawn in the immediate future.

We welcome the withdrawal of troops from Lithuania as a positive step towards the fulfilment of the Helsinki Final Act. We believe that it is of the utmost importance that the countries concerned agree as soon as possible on a date by which the withdrawal should be completed. The demand for such a withdrawal cannot be linked to the solution of any other political issue.

The Nordic countries understand the practical, social and economic problems Russia faces in connection with the withdrawal of troops, and we realize that outside assistance to alleviate some of these difficulties could be helpful. We have already made, or are prepared to make, contributions to solving various practical questions, including housing problems of the returnees, and assume that this will contribute to the rapid completion of the withdrawal of troops from Estonia and Latvia. We urge other countries to take similar measures to this end. Also, we urge the Russian Government not to use the question of such assistance to delay the withdrawal process, which could be completed in practice very soon.

The Nordic countries consider a completion of the withdrawal of Russian military forces from all the Baltic countries an important step on the road to improving relations between the Baltic countries and Russia. Good and trusting relations between these countries will increase the conditions for intensified cooperation in the North European area as a whole.

The Secretary-General's report (A/48/501) on the issue of troop withdrawal from the Baltic States is a good summary of the present situation and the problems that remain to be solved. The Special Envoy, Ambassador Tommy Koh, has been faced with a very complicated issue. We welcome the Secretary-General's readiness to provide his good offices to facilitate the process of withdrawal.

The Nordic countries support the draft resolution (A/48/L.17/Rev.2) put forward under this agenda item by the Baltic States following successful consultations with the Russian Federation. We view it as a sign of good will on both sides that a consensus agreement was reached also this year. The adoption of this draft resolution would underscore once again the importance the international community attaches to the withdrawal of these troops in compliance with the principle of international law as expressed, *inter alia*, by the CSCE: the presence of foreign troops on the territory of a sovereign State requires the consent of that State.

Let us hope that when the Secretary-General submits his report on this issue at next year's session of the General Assembly, he will be able to report that all foreign troops have been withdrawn from the territories of all the Baltic States.

Mr. VORONTSOV (Russian Federation) *(interpretation from Russian)*: The Russian Federation is making active efforts to build full-fledged good-neighbourly relations with Latvia and Estonia and is doing its utmost to ensure the earliest possible settlement of the problems existing in our relations.

Unfortunately, a number of problems remaining from the past still exist in the relations of Russia with Latvia and Estonia. We are trying to resolve them through common efforts, in a spirit of mutual respect and on the basis of understanding the sources and substance of those difficulties which our States are experiencing at this historically important period of their development.

One such problem is the continuing, although considerably reduced, presence of military forces of the former Soviet Union in Latvia and Estonia, which Russia had to take under its jurisdiction as the successor State of the Soviet Union. The full withdrawal of troops from Lithuania within the agreed-upon time-frame, despite the fact that the agreements finalizing legal aspects of the withdrawal have not been completed, would constitute reaffirmation of Russia's good will and its determination to solve this problem.

Since the consideration of this question at the forty-seventh session considerable progress has been achieved in the withdrawal of Russian troops from Latvia and Estonia.

On Latvian territory their numbers have been reduced from 57,000 at the beginning of the withdrawal to 17,000 today - that is, to less than one third. In Estonia, their number has dropped from 25,000 to 4,000, a reduction to less than one sixth.

The problem of the withdrawal of the Russian troops still deployed in Latvia and Estonia is not political. Our country has taken a clear and unequivocal decision on the complete withdrawal of these troops from the territories of the Baltic States. Moreover, we are attempting to complete that withdrawal as early as is technically possible. Russia has no intention of delaying the withdrawal of Russian troops from Latvia and Estonia or of using the issue to exert pressure with regard to other aspects of bilateral relations. In particular, in the course of the negotiating process with Latvia and Estonia we are not linking the issue of withdrawal with the decision on such vital issues for us as the protection of the rights of the Russian-speaking population in those countries.

Unfortunately, work on the agreements to provide a legal basis for solving the set of problems related to troop withdrawal, including the legal, social, material and financial issues involved, has been excessively drawn out. For this, we believe, the Russian side is not to blame. We regret the delay because in our relations with other States of Central and Eastern Europe such issues, when raised, were quickly resolved in a spirit of cooperation and compromise. In this connection, we note a certain imbalance in the provisions of the draft resolution, in that it deals with the "delay" in the troop withdrawal, but does not mention the real and complex problems, whose solution would contribute to a speedy agreement on withdrawal.

We note with satisfaction that in the most recent rounds of bilateral talks between the State delegations of Russia, Latvia and Estonia certain signs of progress in resolving these problems were seen. In particular, in the last round of Russian-Latvian talks it was possible to agree on a set of important provisions regulating issues of troop withdrawal. Nevertheless, such key issues as the date of completion of the withdrawal, the fate of certain strategic installations and the problems of ownership and mutual settlement of payments remain open. But here, too, certain positive shifts are beginning to occur.

One serious obstacle to a speedy completion of troop withdrawal from Latvia and Estonia, as the Secretary-General recognizes in his report, is the problem of building the necessary housing in Russia for troops and family members returning from Latvia and Estonia. In this connection, we welcome the intention expressed by the Government of the Republic of Estonia to seek resources for the construction of housing in Russia, which would enable us to consider the possibility of the withdrawal of troops from that country earlier than the date we had outlined - that is, before the end of 1994. We also welcome the statement we have just heard from the representative of Sweden that the Nordic countries also intend to assist with regard to building housing. We consider that this would also be of great assistance in accelerating troop withdrawal.

It would help set a mutually acceptable timetable for troop withdrawal from Latvia if the Latvian side were to pay compensation for housing now occupied by Russian military personnel in that country. Those funds would make it possible to build or acquire housing in Russia. The Russian military personnel themselves cannot privatize or sell their houses because of discriminatory Latvian legislation, as distinguished from the situation in Lithuania.

The Secretary-General's report pays well-deserved attention to the problem of retired Russian military personnel and family members permanently residing in Latvia and Estonia, who today number approximately 90,000. It is clear from the report that the current situation in which they find themselves can only be described as tragic. Under the terms of the Law on Aliens adopted by the State Assembly of the Republic of Estonia on 8 July 1993, they are deprived of the right to obtain residence permits and are obliged to leave the country, even though the overwhelming majority of them have no housing in Russia. In addition, there have been instances of forced cancellation of the residence permits of retired military personnel, of their being fired from jobs and of threatened deportation from Estonia. The Estonian side has not yet accepted the recommendations of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) High Commissioner on National Minorities with regard to the need to provide this category of the population with the right to obtain residence permits. There are signs that a similar situation may evolve in Latvia as well.

We share the conclusion of the Secretary-General's report, with regard to the issue of the status and social benefits of retired military personnel, that

> "a reasonable response to Russian concerns would be for Estonia to accept CSCE and United Nations suggestions with regard to the decree that is being formulated to implement the Law on Aliens". *(A/48/501, para. 22)*

We also share the Secretary-General's call on Latvia to take into account the opinions and recommendations expressed by the missions sent to that country by the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the CSCE, and

to take positive and urgent measures with regard to the issues concerning retired Russian military personnel. We expect that this acute humanitarian aspect of the problem will soon also find a civilized solution in the negotiations on troop withdrawal, on the basis of the norms and principles of international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, I should like to reaffirm our determination to settle all problems in Russia's relations with Latvia and Estonia in a spirit of cooperation and good-neighbourliness, responsibility and constructiveness. We note with satisfaction that in general during the consultations on the draft resolution between our delegation and the delegations of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia a spirit of cooperation prevailed, ultimately allowing us to arrive at the consensus text which is now before the General Assembly.

Mr. NOTERDAEME (Belgium) *(interpretation from French)*: I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union on the agenda item dealing with the complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the Baltic States.

Under General Assembly resolution 47/21 the Secretary-General sent his Special Envoy, Mr. Koh, to the Baltic States in late August and early September last. Mr. Koh's mandate was to offer his good offices in connection with the question of the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic States. The report he prepared on the outcome of his mission offers us grounds for optimism and for disappointment.

We have grounds, in the first place, for optimism, because the complete withdrawal of Russian units from the territory of Lithuania, which was concluded on 31 August last, opened the way to complete normalization of relations between Lithuania and the Russian Federation. The European Union welcomes this successful outcome and we call on Lithuania and the Russian Federation to resolve definitively matters that are still pending.

We have grounds for disappointment because, although the Russian Federation has already proceeded to repatriate some of its troops, no agreement has yet been reached on complete withdrawal from the territories of Latvia and Estonia. In keeping with the Helsinki Summit Declaration of July 1992 - "The Challenges of Change" - which emphasized that the Russian Federation had an obligation to withdraw its troops from the Baltic States, the European Union once again calls on the States concerned to continue their efforts with a view to concluding the bilateral agreements needed for the early, orderly and complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Estonian and Latvian territory, without linking that withdrawal to any other problems.

It should be possible for the conclusion of the agreement between Lithuania and the Russian Federation to serve as an example of how to resolve the continuing disputes with Latvia and Estonia. Without disregarding the practical difficulties facing the Russian Federation in withdrawing its troops from Latvia and Estonia, the European Union cannot agree that these difficulties should be allowed to jeopardize the implementation of the principle of international law that the presence of foreign troops on the territory of another State requires its consent.

Once again the European Union expresses the hope that the States involved will continue efforts with a view to settling their disputes definitively so that they can open a new era of peaceful and mutually beneficial relations and put an end to the distrust inherited from the past. Against this background, the European Union reiterates its support for the efforts being made by Mr. Koh, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and for his good offices.

For those reasons, the European Union supports the draft resolution now before us.

The PRESIDENT: I wish to announce that the list of speakers for item 32 is now closed.

Mrs. FRECHETTE (Canada): Canada, Australia and New Zealand are pleased to support the draft consensus resolution before the Assembly on the complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territories of the Baltic States.

Last year we adopted a resolution on this question along much the same lines as the text before us. Some progress has been made: we welcome the withdrawal of troops from Lithuania, completed on schedule last August. We regret, however, that one year since its adoption, and two years after the independence of the Baltic States was recognized by the international community, this issue still remains to be resolved.

With regard to the foreign troops remaining in Estonia and Latvia we encourage the parties to continue their dialogue and look forward to an early resolution of their differences. We urge all parties to show flexibility and a greater recognition of the challenges faced by others in fulfilling this objective.

We reiterate our belief that progress on troop withdrawal cannot be linked to other non-related issues. At the same time, we recognize that a host of social and environmental problems connected to the long-standing

presence of foreign troops on Baltic soil exists and must be solved in a spirit of cooperation.

We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report and welcome his active engagement in this process. Good-offices missions, such as the one undertaken by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Mr. Koh, are particularly helpful.

(spoke in French)

We have taken note of the Secretary-General's call concerning the role Member States and regional organizations might play in helping to resolve the remaining questions. We believe regional organizations may be able to help all the parties to reach an understanding on this issue and on others related to peace and stability in the Baltic region.

The draft resolution before us reaffirms the efforts made by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) to help the parties. We support the decisions of the CSCE at its Helsinki and Stockholm meetings in 1992. We welcome the information on troop withdrawal regularly provided in the CSCE context by all the parties.

The CSCE also contributes to regional stability through long-term preventive-diplomacy missions to the region: one has operated for some time in Estonia and one will shortly be established in Latvia. Such initiatives serve to lessen tensions and promote greater understanding between communities.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have made great strides in consolidating their sovereignty and independence. An early, orderly and complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Estonia and Latvia will contribute to security and stability in the region and to good-neighbourly relations, and will serve as an example for the international community.

Mr. GHAFOORZAI (Afghanistan): The Afghan delegation reiterates its principled policy on the item under consideration - that is, our conviction that the inadmissible and unjustifiable presence of foreign military forces in the territory of another State without the consent of the State in question is inadmissible and unjustifiable. The continuing presence of foreign military forces on the territories of Estonia and Latvia cannot be an exception. However, the withdrawal from Lithuania of the last Russian combat unit on 31 August 1993 has been a positive development since the General Assembly considered the item last year. Unfortunately, it must be noted that no agreement on the terms of the troop withdrawal from other Baltic States has been reached in the meantime.

While we see a desire on the part of the Russian Federation to abide by the call of the last session of the General Assembly to - *inter alia* - conclude without delay a timetable for the early, orderly and complete withdrawal of their forces from the territories of Estonia and Latvia, the objective has yet to be fully achieved.

We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Ambassador Tommy Koh, to discharge the mandate which the General Assembly entrusted to the Secretary-General to use good offices to attain the objective of the early, orderly and complete withdrawal of foreign forces still stationed in Estonia and Latvia.

The technical and practical problems involved and presented as reasons for delayed withdrawal will never be understood by world public opinion. These practical issues should in no way delay the complete, orderly and early withdrawal of the foreign forces from the territories of all Baltic States.

We believe that continued cooperation, as well as the taking of immediate and practical steps by the Russian Federation towards the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/21 of 25 November 1992, including an early date for troop withdrawal, would create a positive atmosphere of good will and trust under which all the issues that are impeding the implementation of that resolution would be peacefully and expeditiously resolved.

No foreign military force is a pleasant phenomenon in the mind of a nation. It is a logical conclusion, therefore, to believe that the presence of the foreign troops in Riga, the capital of Latvia, and Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, is offensive to the peoples of these two countries.

To Afghanistan, as the victim of foreign military aggression not too long ago, which feels the pain and suffering of the people in those countries that are still experiencing the presence of foreign military forces in their territories, the continued delay in completing the withdrawal is a matter of concern. It jeopardizes and threatens the early establishment of normal and good relations between the Russian Federation and the Baltic States. It violates the sovereignty of Estonia and Latvia and contributes to the intensification of tension in the area. Therefore the immediate and complete withdrawal of the forces is in the interest of the Russian Federation and other States concerned, in the interest of peace and tranquillity of the region, and in the interest of an atmosphere of understanding conducive to the attainment of the ideals for which this Organization has fought since its inception.

The Afghan delegation is of the opinion that the continued endeavours of regional organizations, such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, as well as the commendable practical assistance of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark, Norway and the United States, will enable our Organization to mark the early and complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the Baltic States.

We salute the determination and perseverance of the freedomloving nations of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia towards seeing their beloved homelands completely free from foreign domination. The Afghan nation shared their joy and pleasure when they celebrated their independence.

We believe it is a moral responsibility to ensure that each Member State benefits from an atmosphere of trust and understanding brought about by the end of the cold war and of world polarization. Let us leave aggression to the past and build new relations based upon respect for each other's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Let animosity belong to the past, and let us build new roads towards sincere friendship. Let others believe that we have faith and trust in dialogue and negotiations as the only way to solve our problems. And let us prove to our future generations that our dedication to peace and human rights laid down the foundation of world relations under which they will live with no fear of the use or threat of use of force, the dangers of war or violations of human rights. Let us enable our sons and daughters to enjoy their human dignity and collectively strive for the peace and progress of their environment. It is our determination that will make such ideals a reality.

Mr. ERDŐS (Hungary) *(interpretation from French)*: Pursuant to resolution 47/21, adopted by the General Assembly just one year ago, the item on the complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territories of the Baltic States remains on the agenda of the Assembly, which is to be kept informed of progress towards its implementation. We note with satisfaction that following talks, the armed forces of the Russian Federation were completely withdrawn from the territory of Lithuania in August 1993; and, despite the remaining problems, this provides impetus to the talks now under way between the Russian Federation and the two other Baltic countries. This achievement demonstrates eloquently that disputes between States can be settled if there is the true political will to succeed, if both sides are willing to compromise, and if each side takes account of the legitimate interests of the other. We feel sure that if this spirit prevails in the talks, then the matter before us today can quickly be cast aside and disappear once and for all from the agenda of the General Assembly.

The Secretary-General's excellent report on this item, based on information collected by Ambassador Koh, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, provides an overview of developments, and is generally positive as to the outcome of the talks and as to the contribution the United Nations can make in dealing with this dispute and in preserving international and regional peace and security. The question of the complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the Baltic countries is a very complex issue. It requires from all of the parties concerned patience, perseverance, political wisdom and special efforts to establish the atmosphere of trust and good will essential to the constructive continuation and successful conclusion of the talks.

Hungary knows from its own experience how important it is to have a responsible and flexible approach, to take account pragmatically of the interests at stake, and to avoid rash statements or actions; without these positive elements, the talks will be impeded by even more difficult obstacles. This is an approach that we feel can lead without undue delay to the conclusion of appropriate agreements, including a timetable on the early, orderly and complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territories of Estonia and Latvia. In this undertaking, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe is called upon to play a primary role, and this will no doubt help to ensure that any outstanding issue can be resolved in ways acceptable to all parties involved on the basis of sovereign equality and in the spirit of good-neighbourliness.

In this context, we note that all the parties are fully in agreement on the need for the withdrawal of the armed forces of the Russian Federation from the territories of the Baltic States. We believe, however, that the talks on implementing this goal must be continued with dynamism and consistency, for the persistence of the present situation is becoming increasingly anachronistic in a Europe which has now freed itself from old political and ideological constraints. We hope that the countries involved will rise to the occasion and conclude, as soon as possible, bilateral agreements on eliminating one of the last vestiges of a bygone era.

The draft resolution is in keeping with the expectations of the international community and suggests the path to be followed. Hungary is happy that once again all delegations concerned support it and that it will therefore be adopted without a vote.

Mr. SIMUTIS (Lithuania): The Lithuanian delegation has the honour to be among the sponsors of draft resolution A/48/L.17/Rev.2, entitled "Complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territories of the Baltic States", under item 32 of the agenda of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

Lithuania is one of the Baltic States, and it is a source of great satisfaction to me to report to the General Assembly that last year's resolution on this subject, resolution 47/21, has been fulfilled as far as Lithuania is concerned. During 1992 and 1993, Lithuania and the Russian Federation conducted long and intensive negotiations in an attempt to reach a comprehensive agreement on the withdrawal of the military forces of the Russian Federation from Lithuania. The two sides could not reach an agreement on all aspects of the withdrawal and issues connected with it; hence, a comprehensive withdrawal agreement could not be achieved. However, on 8 September 1992, a detailed timetable for departure of the Russian troops was agreed upon and signed. The timetable set 31 August 1993 as the final date for the withdrawal of those troops from Lithuania.

In spite of many difficulties and disagreements, which in the final few days led to a suspension of the withdrawal, the final date specified in the timetable agreement was met. Fifteen minutes before midnight on 31 August 1993, the last combat unit of the Russian armed forces crossed the border and left the territory of Lithuania.

The withdrawal of the Russian troops has resulted in a marked improvement in relations between Lithuania and the Russian Federation. It dissipated the mutual resentments and suspicions that had influenced actions and positions of the two sides while the foreign military forces were stationed in Lithuania. The people of Lithuania had perceived these forces as troops of occupation since 1940, when they marched in uninvited, and they stayed for half a century. Their presence and their armed might enabled the Soviet Union to annex our country illegally, and to carry out arrests, executions and massive deportations of our population to Siberia and other harsh regions of the former Soviet Union. Under the cover of the army of occupation, great suffering was imposed on our people. Now that the army has left, the process of healing can begin again.

The continued presence of armed forces of the Russian Federation in Estonia and Latvia raises troubling questions about their ultimate purpose. Particularly troubling is the demand of the Russian Federation for military bases and facilities in Latvia. This is completely unacceptable, since the presence of military bases and facilities forces that independent country into Russia's military sphere without its consent and thus violates its sovereignty and independence.

Lithuania suffered the same long years of Soviet occupation as Estonia and Latvia, and shared with them the joy of liberation and the restoration of our independence. Lithuania fully supports the demand of Estonia and Latvia for the early, orderly and complete withdrawal of the military forces of the Russian Federation from their territories. Maintaining foreign military forces on the territory of another State without its consent is contrary to international law.

Therefore, Lithuania appeals to the international community to uphold international law and to support the draft resolution, which calls for an early, orderly and complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from Estonia and Latvia.

Mr. JAAKSON (Estonia): The Latvian Prime Minister, in introducing the agenda item entitled "Complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territories of the Baltic States", dealt primarily with aspects of this problem that I do not intend to dwell on. They apply equally well to the situation in Estonia, except for the number of troops remaining and the number of bases occupied. Rather, I would like to point out the historical context that makes procrastination in the Russian Federation's removal of its troops from our soil so threatening to our security and to international peace. I would like to add that, although I shall speak about Estonia, the situation I shall describe applies equally well to Latvia and Lithuania.

Estonia established its independence after a solemn declaration by the Soviet Russian Government on 15 November 1917 that all nations had a right to self-government and could separate from the Tsarist empire. Our independence was proclaimed on 24 February 1918. No sooner had independence been declared than Estonia was attacked by both the Soviet and the German armies. Fortunately, the attackers did not prevail and Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs Georgi V. Chicherin proposed negotiations, which led to the cessation of hostilities and to peace. The Peace Treaty of Tartu was signed on 2 February 1920. Article 2 of the Treaty states in part that:

> "... Russia unreservedly recognizes the independence and autonomy of the State of Estonia, and renounces voluntarily and forever all rights of sovereignty formerly held by Russia over the Estonian people ...".

This solemn treaty provision was honoured for four years. On 1 December 1924 the Soviet Government massed troops on the Estonian border and incited an uprising against the democratically elected Government. The uprising failed miserably, and the long hand of Russian complicity was exposed.

In 1932 Estonia signed a non-aggression Treaty with Moscow which stated, among other things:

> "The High Contracting Parties mutually undertake to abstain from any act of aggression against one another ..."

This Treaty was honoured until 1939 when, in collusion with Hitler, Soviet Russia was given a free hand in the Baltic area. The Nazi-Soviet Protocol states:

> "In the event of a territorial or political rearrangement in the areas belonging to the Baltic States, the northern boundary of Lithuania shall represent the boundary of the spheres of influence of Germany and the USSR."

For the Soviet Union, the Nazi-Soviet pact represented a disavowal of the principles underlying every major international agreement concluded by the Soviet Government with its neighbours since 1917.

About a month after the Nazi-Soviet pact was signed, Estonia was presented with an ultimatum by Moscow demanding its accession to a "mutual assistance" pact, under whose terms Estonia was compelled to hand naval and air bases over to the Soviet Union and provide for a garrison of 25,000 Soviet troops. Estonia was given less than eight hours to respond to this ultimatum. When Estonia acceded to the Soviet demands, its fate was sealed. The bases and troops were used to launch an aggressive war against Finland and to undermine Estonian sovereignty; within a year, this led to Estonia's annexation by the Soviet Union.

In 1988 the Supreme Soviets of the then Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian SSRS declared the Nazi-Soviet pact void of any legal standing. A similar conclusion was reached by the Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union in 1989. However, sufficient steps have not been taken to eliminate the consequences of that pact. Four years have elapsed since this historic admission was made by the Congress of People's Deputies. The time has come to honour that admission.

If it were not for these bitter historic lessons of broken treaties and the subversion of our independence through the stranglehold of Soviet Russian bases, we might be more lenient and understanding about the stationing of Russian Federation troops on our soil. However our memories are too vivid. Fifty years of oppression resulted from our agreement to permit the stationing of foreign troops on our soil. The trials and tribulations of our people are too great to recount on this occasion.

Estonia now asks the Russian Federation, as a successor State to the Soviet Union, to honour the peace treaty Estonia had concluded with Soviet Russia and to respect our sovereignty and international law. Is that too much to ask?

It is easy to say that we should not worry too much about the remaining troops on our soil and that the troops will eventually leave Estonia and Latvia as they recently left Lithuania. The Russian side has repeatedly said that the deadline for troop withdrawal is basically related to housing for the troops. This argument lacks any legal content and cannot be considered the reason to keep forces on the territory of another State without the consent of that State. However, we recognize that this is a problem to be solved.

We are concerned that the Russian Federation is looking for excuses to keep its troops in Estonia as long as possible by attempts to link the troop withdrawal to the situation of the "Russian-speaking population" in Estonia. In a statement made here on 28 September it was said:

> "Russia has made peacemaking and the protection of human rights, particularly those of national minorities, the priority of its foreign policy, first and foremost in the territory of the former USSR." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Plenary Meetings, 6th meeting, p. 15)*

The danger of this logic for Estonia is in considering us a part of the former Soviet Union, without recognizing our continued statehood, established in 1918.

Estonia is also accused of violating the human rights of the "Russian-speaking population" in Estonia, despite the fact that no human rights violations have been found by many expert missions of the United Nations, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Council of Europe. According to this logic, it would appear that troops in Estonia may become useful for peace-keeping purposes.

The Russian Federation has implied that it would need a clear mandate from the United Nations and the CSCE for the better accomplishment of its peace-keeping activities. As long as the Russian Federation claims special rights in the "near abroad" its impartiality is questionable.

Therefore, we cannot really speak of traditional peace-keeping. As long as the troops of the Russian Federation remain on our soil, we have reason to feel insecure.

Mr. NOBILO (Croatia): The date 17 September 1991 was one of the great and important days in the history of the United Nations, when the new political and old historical realities in the Baltic States were finally and justly recognized by the granting of full United Nations membership to the Republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

It was a giant step towards the new post-cold war order, and a harbinger of independence and sovereignty for many other nations. Eight months later, the Republic of Croatia - together with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia - also became a Member State of the United Nations.

There is not the slightest doubt that the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia must be fully respected and if necessary protected by the world community. Without the approval of the host State, no foreign troops can be situated within its internationally recognized boundaries. The Baltic States cannot be an exception to this rule, which is the pillar of regional and global stability. Therefore, Croatia supports the complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territories of Latvia and Estonia.

Any serious delay in this process, contrary to the agreed timetable, would jeopardize the basic principles for which this Organization stands. Croatia therefore calls for the precise implementation of the timetable for the withdrawal of these troops. The positive experience of the withdrawal of foreign troops from other Eastern European countries should serve as a guideline to the Baltic States as well.

Parallel to the problem of a foreign military presence in the Baltics, some serious questions relating to the protection of human rights in that area are emerging. It is our opinion that these two problems must be dealt with separately and cannot be considered in the same context. All the existing human rights questions in the Baltic States, especially the minority problems, must be considered and resolved without rattling military sabres. The presence of foreign troops within the territories of sovereign States, in the name of protecting the social, cultural, ethnic, linguistic or religious rights of minorities, cannot justify any effort to promote human rights. These questions have to be resolved through the internal political process and legislation with full respect for international norms and standards with regard to human rights and in close cooperation with the relevant international institutions and bodies.

Croatia firmly supports the view that preventive diplomacy is the most desirable and effective means of easing tensions and achieving just and lasting solutions. Unfortunately, preventive diplomacy failed in the Balkans on the territories of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. History has recently taught us the cruel lesson of how horrible crimes can be committed in the name of protecting someone's human rights. We must not forget Serbia's unfounded statement that the rights of Serbian people in Croatia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina were being violated or its use of its military presence on the territories of these two States Members of the United Nations to launch a brutal act of aggression designed to seize as much of their land as possible.

Easing tensions that could create a new regional crisis or expand existing ones is today one of the major goals of the work of the United Nations. In the light of that effort, two major principles must be fulfilled. The first one is full respect for, and protection of, human and minority rights. The other is the full and unconditional withdrawal of uninvited foreign military forces from the territories of sovereign States Members of the United Nations. The violation of one of these principles cannot justify blocking the fulfilment of the other.

By supporting this draft resolution, we are urging all the parties - the Baltic States and the Russian Federation - to proceed in the direction of finding mutually acceptable and peaceful solutions without linking two different processes, thus helping to strengthen European and global stability.

The PRESIDENT: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/48/L.17/Rev.2. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/48/L.17/Rev.2 was adopted (resolution 48/18).

The PRESIDENT: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 32?

It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 151

UNITED NATIONS INITIATIVE ON OPPORTUNITY AND PARTICIPATION: DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/48/L.19)

The PRESIDENT: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Papua New Guinea, Mr. John Kaputin, to introduce draft resolution A/48/L.19.

Mr. KAPUTIN (Papua New Guinea): I am pleased to open the debate on agenda item 15, which bears the title "United Nations initiative on opportunity and participation".

It is only a little more than a year since I had the honour of proposing the initiative in this Hall. Though I was - as I remain - convinced that the proposal deals with issues of global concern, I was able at that time to speak only on behalf of Papua New Guinea. Today, I address the Assembly in the knowledge that the proposal enjoys the support of many other Governments, regional and international organizations, groups of United Nations Members and non-governmental organizations.

In the Asia-Pacific region alone, the proposal has been formally and unanimously endorsed by the South Pacific Forum, the Melanesian Spearhead Group and the Association of South-East Asian Nations. It enjoys the backing of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries as well as of members of the Group of 77, the Forum of Small States, the Alliance of Small Island States and regional groups in widely scattered parts of the world. It has been discussed and favourably received not only in developing but in advanced industrial countries.

The proposal is being supported in practical ways by the United Nations Development Programme, which has provided assistance for a regional workshop on opportunity and participation. It is being encouraged by a large and growing number of non-governmental organizations.

In addition, I am pleased to announce the recent receipt of a letter welcoming the initiative from the European Co-President of the Joint Assembly of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States and the European Community.

As the size of the book distributed to all delegations outlining the origins, nature and evolution of the proposal suggests, the idea that the United Nations should sponsor a study of practical options for increasing opportunity and participation has grown from a glimmer into a well-illuminated - and, I believe, illuminating - idea.

As far as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is concerned, the theme embodied in the Papua New Guinea Government's proposal has become a beacon for efforts to grapple with what the *Human Development Report 1993* describes as "the central issue of our time": development of, for and by people.

We are debating the proposed United Nations initiative on opportunity and participation at a time when the issues affecting the economic future of significant parts of the world are about to be determined. Within hours, the fate of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) may be decided. A few days later, leaders from countries involved in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum are due to meet. In exactly a month, the deadline for completion of the Uruguay Round of negotiations on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) expires.

Although the Governments of developing countries are generally not key players, the decisions which will be made - or will not, as the case may be - are of the greatest importance to their economies and their peoples' welfare. Whatever the outcome, a serious effort to review options for maximizing opportunity and participation, particularly, though not exclusively, for citizens in the economies of developing countries, will be required if the current decline in the economic prospects in and of many developing countries is to be halted, let alone reversed.

The world is going through a phase which has been aptly described as a time of extraordinary change in world affairs. The particular aptness of that description arises from its having been included in a report prepared by a body, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which acts as a guardian for future generations. In UNICEF's words,

> "much of the developing world is today facing the worst financial famine of the modern era. ...
>
> "But despite ... [the] problems, the prospects for progress have been profoundly improved by the enormous ... upheavals of recent years". *(The State of the World's Children 1993, p. 20)*

There is, so UNICEF believes, "new hope for world development". If certain situations can be avoided, then

> "there is real hope of achieving sustained economic growth". *(ibid., p. 11)*

But what is the basis for that hope? As the number, seriousness and variety of items on the General Assembly's agenda suggest, more of the world is changing - more

dramatically and in more ways - than at any time in the previous 48 years of the United Nations experience.

As the late 1980s have turned into the 1990s, and the current decade has advanced, so previous - once seemingly permanent - international alignments have collapsed or been disbanded. Many orthodox ideas have met, or face, a similar fate. Much that seemed certain during the cold war has been left behind. Old uncertainties have re-emerged. New uncertainties continue to arise, to grow and to spread.

Despite a number of obvious successes, particularly in and by newly industrializing countries, the difficulties and prospects facing many developing countries seem not only to be getting worse, but to be doing so at an ever increasing rate. In most parts of the developing world - or, should I say those parts of the world where development is needed and wanted, though not necessarily attained - there is what the report of the South Commission described in 1990 at page 79, as

> "a deep awareness of the limitations of past development strategies and a growing conviction that the way out of the present crisis does not lie in returning to those strategies".

The *Human Development Report 1993* makes much the same point in similar terms.

As regards the international community's approach to conditions, including needs, plans and aspirations, in many developing countries, I can do no better than to repeat the observation made in the Secretary-General's latest annual report on the work of the Organization:

> "A new, workable and widely agreed concept of development still eludes us." *(A/48/1, para. 8)*

The hope for improvement is real enough, but the basis for hope is less than clear.

The Secretary-General's gloomy conclusion applies even in countries like Papua New Guinea, where gross national product per head of population is currently rising at more than 9 per cent a year. Put quite simply, not enough is being done, and not enough is known, about the most effective options for increasing or, even more importantly, linking opportunity and participation.

In proposing the initiative embodied in the draft resolution on opportunity and participation, the Papua New Guinea Government is not claiming that it has already found the concept which the international community seeks. But we believe that a comprehensive, systematic and thorough study of practical options for maximizing opportunity and participation, with particular reference to the citizens and the economies of developing countries, can help in the search. It can, we believe, make a potentially valuable contribution towards the improvement of conditions in countries where development is a widely shared need and goal, if not yet an actual achievement.

In line with our commitment to the United Nations, development and sustainability, we believe that such a study can serve interests which are shared across differences between developed and developing countries, national and regional boundaries, and generations. We certainly think that the composition, work and recommendations of the panel that carries out the study should be consistent with such widespread interests. We strongly believe that an acceptable and practical report must be based on genuine commitment, and be directed to furthering common interests.

The outcome should be a globally relevant contribution to a global concern that ought to be regarded as a global responsibility: a practical addition to processes of sustainable development in which human beings, regardless of individual, ethnic and socio-economic differences, are, as the Rio Declaration says they should be, at the centre.

Concepts and words that are widely employed in relation to developing countries by States Members and specialized agencies of the United Nations suggest a certain weariness with discussion, failure in practice and exhaustion of ideas. I refer, in particular, to the widespread use of terms such as "reconstruction", "recovery" and "revitalization".

Increasing aid fatigue, so-called, in the advanced industrial countries seems to have a counterpart in a growing fatalism about the prospects for significant change in many developing countries.

Not only language but thought and, even more importantly, what is being done, about development seem to be in urgent need of what is being widely described as reactivation.

At the same time, needs, pressures and openings for scarce resources continue to grow around the world, including in countries whose economies are in transition from State control to markets. As a result, development in and of many developing countries depends on more being done with less, at least for the foreseeable future.

The interests of everyone involved in or with developing countries will be better served if opportunity

and participation are maximized, or at least increased, and then sustained for the benefit of succeeding generations. The mutuality of these interests extends from the people and the Governments of the developing countries themselves to aid donors, commercial and concessional lenders, investors and trading partners, as well as neighbours and other concerned human beings. In fact, only if opportunity and participation are both increased and linked can the sustainable development of our planet become a realistic goal.

In short, the Government of Papua New Guinea believes that adoption of the draft resolution before us serves a common world-wide and inter-generational interest. It is on the basis of such a belief that we originally proposed the appointment of a panel of distinguished expert and experienced persons, broadly representative of the international community, to identify options for increasing opportunity and participation, with particular, though not exclusive, reference to the economies of developing countries. It is on exactly the same basis that we now seek the General Assembly's support for the draft resolution's adoption.

In many parts of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the South Pacific, including Papua New Guinea, many people are still looking for ways of entry into the cash economy. Others are trying to increase their involvement.

While the particular combination of features in some areas may be unique, the overall situation is not. Many difficulties are either identical or similar to problems faced by people seeking opportunities to participate in the economies of other countries. Experience at other times and in other places may help in the identification or application of local, national and regional solutions.

Markets are widely regarded as almost automatically offering opportunities for economic participation. The transition from State control to markets is often expected to produce just as automatic an increase in the size, number and variety of economic openings.

But problems can be difficult to identify; they can be even more difficult to overcome. Practical means of bringing about the improvement and effective use of access can frequently be elusive. Securing a link between opportunity and participation is vital for meaningful development to occur.

In many countries, limits on opportunity and participation have been inherited, imposed or in some other way imported from abroad, often before, and sometimes after, independence. Possible methods for reducing, removing or otherwise overcoming their effects can sometimes be found, or adapted from approaches which have been tried abroad. A thorough understanding of relevant problems, a systematic analysis of possible options and a comprehensive exchange of experiences and ideas are likely to be necessary, helpful and productive.

Members of many delegations will be familiar with the sorts of problems that citizens of developing countries have in capitalizing their resources. They will be aware of the inability - verging on unwillingness - of many financial institutions to lend on the basis of personal promise, education, skill or land held under traditional tenure systems. They will know of obstacles that lie in the way of attempts to vest ownership, management or control of commercial enterprises in traditional kin or ethnic groups and to safeguard traditional inheritance rules. They will have observed the operation of policies and procedures which favour and further entrench already established interests, thus hindering prospective new entrants from competing effectively in some markets. Many will be aware of difficulties such as the way in which even specialized agencies of the United Nations call for tenders for aid-funded projects which are either so large or subject to such technical specifications that local firms simply cannot compete.

Though relevant authorities in developing countries are often themselves committed to change, many find it hard to identify, let alone to implement, alternative methods of avoiding, reducing, removing or otherwise countering unwelcome, unnecessary and unfair limitations on citizens' opportunities for meaningful participation.

But there are alternatives deserving of close consideration. The manner in which villagers in my home area in Papua New Guinea have gathered coconuts and traditional shell-money to buy shares in a locally owned corporation is a case in point. The way in which close kin can be given responsibility for repayment of small loans to would-be entrepreneurs in Indonesia is another.

Though it cannot avoid addressing external factors, the ad hoc panel proposed in the draft resolution is likely to find itself concerned primarily with difficulties which can be removed and options which can be expanded as a result of local, national and regional action. Much of its work may, in practice, take the form of a global information exhange: an active example of world-wide collective self-reliance, involving North-South, South-South, regional and interregional cooperation.

But I am predicting, not prescribing.

The principal purpose of the project is to learn, share experiences, and explore ideas. It is, in fact, precisely

because relevant obstacles, options and answers often have still to be identified that a panel of the kind outlined in the draft resolution is required.

The proposal which forms the basis of the draft resolution is intended to ensure that the United Nations itself take the initiative on an issue of the greatest importance to many Members and, as I have already argued, of potential benefit to all. The first and second preambular paragraphs draw attention to circumstances of and in many developing countries, which the initiative is intended to address.

The third implicitly recognizes the need to avoid duplication and encourages members of the proposed panel to see themselves as paving the way, providing a complement and giving assistance, by way of elaboration, to the Secretary-General's efforts in preparing an agenda for development.

The fourth preambular paragraph acknowledges the responsibility and role of the United Nations in promoting development in all parts of the world.

The next preambular paragraph makes it plain that the proposed initiative is focused on developing countries, while being relevant and offering potential benefits to other parts of the world.

The sixth preambular paragraph is designed to direct the panel's attention to documents which help to explain the origins, development and intended purpose of its task while respecting its independence and not instructing it in exact detail on what to do.

The remaining paragraphs in the preamble - the seventh, eighth and ninth - are intended to place the initiative in the context of other United Nations activities, plans and resolutions of particular relevance to developing countries.

Operative paragraph 1 acknowledges the work being carried out in relation to development problems elsewhere in the United Nations system, particularly by the Secretary-General.

In order to avoid duplication or the creation of further ongoing institutions, the following paragraph makes it clear that the proposed panel is to be set up to perform a specific and important task. The range of experience and expertise on which it draws should be diverse.

Operative paragraph 3 asks the Secretary-General to assume responsibility for selecting the panel's members in consultation with Members of the United Nations, including regional groups. It specifies when its work should begin. It sets a firm limit on its duration. It is intended to keep costs to a minimum consistent with achieving the desired result, by encouraging the Secretary-General to recruit from existing sources of appropriately skilled and informed advice, while allowing him to draw on others, including bodies which are either not named or under-represented on current lists.

Consistent with recognition of the financial constraints within which the entire United Nations currently functions - constraints reflected in operative paragraphs 3 and 4 - I should like to draw the General Assembly's attention to the commitment which I have already announced on behalf of the Government of Papua New Guinea to make a special donation of 100,000 Kina - approximately $102,000 - to help fund the panel's work.

I should also like to reinforce the recommendation made by the Non-Aligned Movement's Standing Ministerial Committee for Economic Cooperation that other Governments and interested parties consider making special donations of their own. In fact, the Government of Papua New Guinea thinks the overall project is so vital to our national interests that we are prepared to consider providing other forms of assistance, including hosting such meetings as might be appropriate for the panel to hold in our region.

Operative paragraph 5 is intended to ensure that efforts to identify and implement options for maximizing opportunity and participation will not be limited to one effort within the United Nations system. Other bodies will be encouraged to contribute what they can.

The first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the fourth World Conference on Women come readily to mind.

The overall effect of the paragraph is to direct attention towards extending the consideration of relevant issues beyond the ad hoc panel in time, through other bodies, and to activities which complement and might play a part in giving effect to its recommendations.

Operative paragraph 6 provides for transparency and accountability by asking the Secretary-General to see that the General Assembly is kept informed of the panel's work.

The final paragraph ensures that Members can review - and comment on - the panel's work.

As I have said in the introduction to the book *Opportunity and Participation*, both

> "... are near-universal human aspirations. Linked, as in practice they must be for meaningful development to occur, they are important objectives for policy-makers in Governments, non-governmental bodies, as well as regional and international organizations, in almost every part of an ever-more interdependent world."

The initiative which will result from the adoption of the draft resolution is intended to advance global interests.

I therefore commend the draft resolution to all Members of the United Nations, and ask that it be adopted by consensus.

It gives me great pleasure to conclude by drawing the General Assembly's attention to the diversity of the draft resolution's original co-sponsors. In doing so, I have the honour to acknowledge with deep appreciation the co-sponsorship of the delegations of Algeria, Bahamas, Barbados, Benin, Fiji, Grenada, Indonesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Namibia, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. I also acknowledge with appreciation the co-sponsorship, formally given only after the text of the draft resolution had been issued, by other delegations, including Belize and Mongolia.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform members that there is a correction to the text in the English version of the draft resolution. In the third line of operative paragraph 3, the word "may" is replaced by the word "will", so that the phrase now reads: "so that they will commence their study in January 1994". Other language versions will be adjusted accordingly if need be.

Mr. BLANEY (United States of America): The United States welcomes this opportunity to address the General Assembly on expanding economic opportunity and participation, and is pleased to support the spirit of the draft resolution put forward by the delegation of Papua New Guinea.

My delegation believes that the draft resolution before us is of great relevance to the economies of all Member States, especially the economies of developing countries and countries in transition. True economic development depends on the participation of individuals in their economy, and by extension of countries in international economic relations; opportunity is a key to participation at all levels of economic development.

Certain long-standing, inherited or externally imposed interests can have the effect of impeding market mechanisms. Therefore, the ability to maintain successful economic conditions and to create new opportunities within developing countries and economies in transition is greatly hampered, with the sum effect of impeding participation in development. By joining consensus on this text, Member States will have agreed to address impediments to economic opportunity and participation.

My delegation recognizes that this initiative draws much strength from the consensus outcome of the activities of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Agenda 21 and the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Therefore, my delegation is pleased to note that the draft resolution makes use of the Commission on Sustainable Development's roster of experts for the purpose of assembling this study panel.

The panel, balanced in its representation of members, would address this initiative in the light of the current international economic, administrative, regulatory environment. It would pay close attention to interrelationships between economic development issues and issues commonly associated with social development - poverty, human resource development and health. Social realities have a direct bearing on economic development, and neither can be improved at the expense of the other. Finally, we must take great care to account for the least developed countries' interests in implementing the initiative before us.

Mr. BUTLER (Australia): Australia supports what we see as the major objective of the Papua New Guinea economic initiative, which is to mobilize untapped domestic resources and create economic opportunities for local people. The need to improve economic opportunities for, and the participation of, people in developing countries remains a challenge of the utmost importance. It calls for the close attention of the international community, and we would welcome further work to identify practical options to increase opportunities for, and participation of, local business and all social sectors in developing countries.

At the launch of this initiative in the debate at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the Foreign Minister of Papua New Guinea, the Honourable John Kaputin, said that the initiative was in some respects

> "the economic counterpart to 'An Agenda for Peace'". *(A/47/PV.30, p. 22)*

Australia strongly supports the Papua New Guinea Government's view that enhanced economic security is a major contributing factor to enduring peace and stability. Indeed, Australia's Foreign Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, in his book *Cooperating for Peace*, introduced in this Hall in October, paid much attention to the need for social and economic development in the development of peace-building strategies.

We further note the view of the Papua New Guinea Foreign Minister, expressed at the forty-seventh session, that the Papua New Guinea economic initiative should be seen as a practical contribution to the agenda for development. As the United Nations approaches its fiftieth anniversary, we face an urgent need to reassess the role of the Organization - and of the whole international community - on the pressing issue of development. Australia strongly supports the aims of an agenda for development and looks forward to the Secretary-General's interim report on progress in its preparation.

Senator Evans also devoted much attention in his book to the issue of rationalization of United Nations administration and resources. Australia attaches particular importance to enhanced coordination within the United Nations system and to the effective use of its limited resources. In this light, and in view of the links between the underlying objective of the Papua New Guinea initiative and related United Nations activities, Australia favours the exploration of ways in which the initiative could be harmonized with other processes currently under way, such as an agenda for development.

The potential institutional and budgetary implications of establishing a new expert panel suggest the need also to explore whether an appropriate existing panel could pursue the objectives of the Papua New Guinea initiative. Discussion on this matter would need to take place in the context of further information on estimates of the likely budgetary impact of the initiative, and on the mandates of existing expert panels.

The United Nations currently has three panels of experts with a mandate to address development issues: the High-Level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development, the roster of experts attached to that Board and the Committee for Development Planning. The future of the latter Committee in fact remains to be resolved.

Australia welcomes the intention of the Papua New Guinea Government to make a financial contribution to the realization of its initiative.

Australia has studied with interest the background documents circulated by Papua New Guinea in support of its proposal: the proceedings of both the national Papua New Guinea and the regional workshops hosted by that country during 1993 to develop the initiative. Australia would like to see clarified what we understand to be suggestions that a more protectionist approach, or raising economic barriers rather than lowering them, may be part of the answer to the problem of linking opportunity with participation for local people. It is Australia's strong view that reducing, rather than raising, the barriers to trade between economies will enhance economic opportunity and participation.

Mr. GEORGE (Federated States of Micronesia): For a newly-emerged island country such as the Federated States of Micronesia there can be no higher priority than development, and we are not alone. It is the most widely and constantly discussed subject here at the United Nations. The world itself is divided in many ways, but in no way more familiar to us than between developed and developing countries, or as it is often put, between North and South. One hundred and twenty-seven of the United Nations Members, more than two thirds, devote the bulk of our energies here to one thing - development.

This is not surprising, because the United Nations, in concept, is largely about securing the future, and without development most of the people of the world face a very grim future. But, for all the focus up to this point on what is surely a most central concern of mankind, results have been very uneven. Huge sums have been spent, and in some developing countries great progress has been made, while in others it seems that all the expert analysis, all the planning and all the conferences have made little difference. Even where progress has occurred, too often we see it impacting favourably upon the lives of only limited groups within societies, while thousands, even millions, of others wait in vain for the fruits of development.

In other words, there is a need to find ways of making more efficient use of increasingly scarce assistance dollars, and of reaching those who are not reached by the development process. The draft resolution to launch the United Nations initiative on opportunity and participation addresses that need, in the view of my delegation, in a most appropriate way. Accordingly, I take this occasion to reiterate the strong support of the Federated States of Micronesia, which was expressed here by Secretary Resio Moses during the general debate. We are proud to co-sponsor the draft resolution and are grateful to the Government of Papua New Guinea, to Minister John Kaputin and to Ambassador Lohia for their vision and untiring efforts in bringing this matter forward.

My country is one of many that stand to benefit enormously by the process called for in the draft resolution. My people have for a number of years had access to various forms of assistance, primarily from the United States, both as inhabitants of a Trust Territory and, more recently, as citizens of an independent country. We now also receive increasing aid from several of our neighbours in the Asia-Pacific region. As a United Nations Member, we are working with the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank group, and we are participating to the extent we can in all the many ongoing processes of this body aimed at encouraging development. Finally, we participate in a number of Pacific regional organizations, where we join with our island brothers to address common developmental problems.

But with all this, the pace of development has been and remains very slow in my country. While it is true that today visitors are struck by the advances made in several of our urban centres, much of the rest of the country is little different, and for a great many of our people life is largely unchanged. Worst of all, those people have little prospect of becoming part of the process of advancement. Is it because they lack ambition? No - thanks to modern telecommunications, they are very much aware of their position. Do they lack energy? Certainly not - survival at, or near, subsistence level is hard work. Are they oppressed by their leaders? Again, no. Ours is a thoroughly democratic society, and our strong, extended-family system makes our leaders, if anything, even more accountable.

We would already have become very discouraged had we not known that most other developing countries are in much the same condition. But just knowing that does not make us better servants of the people. It does not address the ineffectiveness of our utilization of development assistance. It does not give us the insight needed to unlock the great potential that exists in broader participation by our citizens in the advancement of their country.

What we do gain from this awareness of similar developmental profiles among developing countries is the realization that many of the fundamental obstacles we are experiencing are probably not attributable to inadequacies unique to us. Thus, through the United Nations initiative on opportunity and participation we are given a powerful new resource to gain an understanding of our difficulties and to chart a more effective course for the future. The work carried out through the initiative will significantly enhance the outcome of the great developmental efforts now under way and will, in particular, go far towards facilitating the fullest possible implementation of Agenda 21.

Paragraph 4 of the draft resolution invites Member States and international organizations to contribute on a voluntary basis towards its implementation. Foreign Minister Kaputin has placed us even more deeply in his country's debt by announcing that Papua New Guinea is making a very generous contribution. The Federated States of Micronesia also wishes to demonstrate its appreciation and support for the initiative and, therefore, at the appropriate time, we will contribute to the voluntary fund a sum that will confirm our recognition of its importance to us.

We join the sponsors of the draft resolution in calling for its adoption by consensus.

Mr. SOEGARDA (Indonesia): Allow me at the outset to express my delegation's sincere appreciation to Mr. John R. Kaputin, the Foreign Minister of Papua New Guinea, for his informative and thought-provoking introductory statement on this agenda item. My delegation believes that all of us here will give it the serious consideration such a proposal on this important issue deserves.

We gather here today to consider this item on the United Nations initiative on opportunity and participation against the backdrop of the international community's relentless search for ways and means to improve the human condition. Such a search is driven by the need to redress the major economic problems confronting the developed and developing countries alike, as well as the need to take advantage of the opportunities and challenges presented by the post-cold-war era.

We therefore believe the time is opportune for initiatives to accelerate development, eradicate poverty and revitalize the global economy. Within that rubric there is a definite movement, both at the conceptual level and with regard to consensus building. The concept of development is increasingly seen as broad based and centred on people, as has been clearly demonstrated at the tenth Summit Meeting of the countries members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries last year and, time and again, by the Group of 77. To this end the South Commission, in its report, "Challenge to the South," has emphasized the priority goal of meeting the basic needs of the majority of the people and a firm commitment to the removal of poverty and hunger. The concept has also evolved to encompass sustainability and is adapting to the provisions of Agenda 21. So too, the International Development Strategy, the Declaration of the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly and the commitments of the eighth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD VIII) have helped to reorient and broaden the concept and indivisibility of the social,

economic and political dimensions of development and make them more fully accepted.

Moreover, the need to achieve people-centred development requires increasing focus on human-resources development and national-capacity building. We believe that each of those aspects of development, among others, should be integrated in the proposed agenda for development. In this context we can appreciate the timeliness and relevance of increased sensitivity to the need to strengthen the availability of opportunities for people in development and their increased participation in charting their own destinies. In that light, and in keeping with the concept of people-centred development, it is important that Governments define their national development strategies so as to embrace the objectives of increased access to opportunity and participation for all people in development.

It is within this framework that my delegation supports the Papua New Guinea proposal to bring its initiative to the attention of the international community. In this vein, we believe that it is essential to make a serious effort to achieve consensus on the draft resolution on the item before us.

The PRESIDENT: I wish to announce that the list of speakers for item 151 is now closed.

Mr. HOROI (Solomon Islands): On behalf of the people and Government of Solomon Islands, I should like to congratulate the Papua New Guinea Government on proposing a United Nations initiative on opportunity and participation.

In line with agreements reached by the Melanesian Spearhead Group, as well as by all members of the South Pacific Forum, we are pleased to offer the proposal our support. As my country's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs told the General Assembly a month ago, we welcome the Papua New Guinea proposal. Sharing many interests, including needs and aspirations, with the country from which the proposal comes, we are proud to be one of the sponsors of the relevant draft resolution (A/48/L.19).

Having been represented at the Regional Workshop on Opportunity and Participation, we are gratified at the way in which other Members and specialized agencies of the United Nations have adopted the proposal, as well as the theme, as their own.

Like people in other parts of the developing world, many Solomon Islanders are still looking for ways of supplementing, or even replacing, subsistence activities by entering the cash economy for the first time. Others are already much more immediately concerned with increasing the scope, number and diversity of their involvement in income-generating activities. Realization of the commitment to sustainable development made by the people and Government of Solomon Islands means that opportunities for participation must not only grow but be maximized, and, above all, linked.

"Opportunity and Participation" is not just the name of a particular initiative proposed for and by Members of the United Nations. It is a goal to which people in every part of the world aspire, to which Governments state that they are committed, and to which various other bodies, including the United Nations Development Programme, claim to adhere.

In countries like mine, where economic development barely keeps pace with rising population and costs, increasing opportunity and participation is an important key to equity, growth and national self-reliance. The difficulties which lie in the way of attaining such goals are often substantial and quite diverse. They include problems such as traditional land-tenure systems, which prevent resources which the people undoubtedly own from being used in order to raise capital for investment or to secure loans. They extend to legal regimes which do not provide adequately for traditional modes of property ownership or inheritance. They also embrace shortages of relevant education, training and skills. As in other newly independent countries, some of these difficulties have foreign origins. The causes of others are clearly home-grown. What often appears to be lacking is effective access to ideas about means, including the availability of appropriate technology, through which such difficulties can be overcome.

The ad hoc panel on opportunity and participation proposed in the Papua New Guinea draft resolution offers a promising, progressive and, above all, practical approach. If we are to make good use of its findings, then we must maximize them and adopt such approaches and solutions as seem suitable for ourselves. The project is, moreover, one to which I believe that those of us with practical experience of development in Solomon Islands can also make effective and sometimes original contributions to development in our own and other regions.

In reading through the draft resolution, I am pleased to note the sensitivity it displays to the diverse circumstances of different countries. While it focuses on the particular needs of developing countries, it also takes account of others' needs. It adopts what might accurately be described as a genuinely global approach. The draft resolution also displays a welcome awareness of the

financial and other resource constraints which limit the ability of the United Nations to undertake additional responsibilities, even when they are as widely welcomed - and as economical - as the proposed panel study and report on opportunity and participation.

The Papua New Guinea Government's offer to make a special donation to assist in implementing its proposal is to be warmly and highly commended, as is the effort which it has put into ensuring that the proposal fits in with other development-related activities undertaken by the Secretariat and specialized agencies of the United Nations.

The ambitiously close deadline set for completion of the ad hoc panel's task should help to ensure that costs are kept in check. It also means that the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations will - quite appropriately - have something to offer specifically to all who are interested in the problems and prospects of a significant part of the global community: the citizens of developing countries. The proposal allows the United Nations itself to assume credit for the initiative, and this modest approach deserves applause.

The official motto of Solomon Islands is "To lead is to serve". In similar fashion, I would suggest that to participate in the national economy is to contribute to national development - both directly, through purchases of goods and services, and indirectly, in various other ways, including taxation. Maximizing opportunities for participation not only provides for those who are directly involved but sets an example for others to follow, and, if they can, exceed. While openings should be as widely and readily accessible as possible, we cannot always realistically expect uniform or equal outcomes.

The Government of Solomon Islands feels that the emphasis which the United Nations is putting on the human aspects of development is exactly what countries like ours need. We look forward to its elaboration as the work of the proposed ad hoc panel on opportunity and participation proceeds.

I have both the honour and pleasure of stating, on behalf of the people and Government of Solomon Islands, that the proposed United Nations initiative and draft resolution on opportunity and participation enjoy our strong support, and we urge the adoption of the draft resolution by general consensus.

Mr. SENILOLI (Fiji): My delegation wishes to express its strong support for the proposal before the General Assembly today for the implementation of the United Nations initiative on opportunity and participation.

We commend His Excellency The Honourable John Kaputin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Papua New Guinea, and his Government for the foresight, diligence and commitment they have demonstrated in bringing this initiative to the attention of the Assembly.

We would like to thank, in particular, the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea, Ambassador Renagi Renagi Lohia, and his delegation for the background documents that they have provided. Their efforts have certainly been helpful in enriching our understanding of the initiative.

At the same time, we would like to acknowledge the very valuable contribution that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is making to the international debate and to focusing world attention on increasing opportunities for the participation of people at all levels of development. We are particularly grateful to UNDP for the assistance that it is providing to the countries in our region in the preparation of our regional Pacific human development report.

While the concepts of opportunity and participation may be highly complex, they are nevertheless very relevant to the work the United Nations is doing in its continuing efforts to establish world peace, social progress and better standards of living in larger freedom through genuine international cooperation and participation. The world today is becoming increasingly interdependent and, at the same time, increasingly integrated. Moreover, it is on the verge of a major transition. We must do everything possible to ensure that this globalization will not widen further the ever-increasing gap between the developed and the developing countries.

An equitable system of international order is urgently needed to ensure that developing countries, and especially the smaller nations that are included in this category, do not for ever remain in a position of dependence that could continue to prevent them from effectively participating in important matters affecting them. Due attention needs to be given to increased opportunities for dialogue between developed and developing countries, access to trade, development finance and transfer of technology. In this context of rapid changes in the world social, economic and political situation, we believe that a global initiative such as the one that is currently being mooted is both timely and very necessary.

People everywhere today have an increasing urge to participate fully in all events and processes affecting their lives and living conditions. It is widely recognized that it is only when people set their own goals, develop their own approaches and take their own decisions that human

creativity can best be realized and that the results of development are more likely to be self-sustaining.

The pioneering studies undertaken by UNDP provide a rather gloomy picture of the extent to which people today are able to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and of the opportunity they have to put their capabilities to full use for the betterment of their lives.

Allow me briefly to highlight some basic facts from these studies, as they provide an important backdrop against which we must view our support for this initiative on opportunity and participation.

The *Human Development Report 1993* points out there are more than 1 billion people today living in abject poverty, despite the fact that the world is producing enough food for all of its 5.7 billion people. The richest fifth of the world's population enjoys more than 150 times the income enjoyed by the poorest fifth of the population. The bottom 20 per cent receive only 1.4 per cent of the world's income; it has a share of only 1 per cent in world trade, 0.2 per cent in world commercial lending and 1.3 per cent of world investment.

Furthermore, because of trade restrictions, global markets are denying as much as 500 billion dollars worth of market opportunities every year to developing countries and poor people. This, as we know, is equivalent to almost 10 times more than the foreign assistance the developing nations are receiving. The situation is even more worrisome when widening disparities in higher levels of education, technology and information systems are added to the picture.

Enrolment in tertiary education in the developing countries is only one fifth that of the developed countries. Research and development expenditure is only 4 per cent of that of developed countries and the number of scientific and technical personnel is only one ninth of the number in developed countries. The UNDP report stresses that these widening human development gaps have a telling impact in our world today, where technological progress is taking centre stage and where it now accounts for from one third to one half of the increase in national output.

The report goes on to stress further that the full participation of people in defining their own lives and their own future can be achieved only where non-governmental organizations, entrepreneurs, women, and indeed all people are empowered to take initiative and participate in open markets and effective government, where pluralism prevails, and where human rights and access to information of all types are guaranteed.

My country attaches the utmost importance to the participation of people in all development efforts. Our strategic plan is the blueprint by which we are making all possible efforts to build a society that offers ample opportunities for our people to improve their conditions of life. We are, at the same time, strongly committed to providing community care for those who are less able to help themselves. Our national policies recognize that, when people have the opportunity to work, they are best able to raise their living standards.

We in Fiji are convinced that productive employment gives people a real sense of purpose and self-respect. It enables them to look after themselves and their families. Without growing employment, more and more people will become dependent on government, which, in turn, will then be less able to apply the resources needed for capital investment in the provision of infrastructure to support and generate development activities and in the construction of public utilities such as schools, hospitals, water supply and housing.

While our national policy is critical to increasing opportunity and participation, we believe that efforts at the international level are also of vital importance. Our own efforts alone will not solve this problem. The United Nations initiative on opportunity and participation must, in this context, ensure that an independent and objective assessment of the global social and economic imbalances is undertaken.

We trust that this assessment will be helpful in identifying the difficulties that are being encountered in widening opportunities and participation both within countries and at the international level. We hope the panel of experts that will be appointed will be successful in recommending practical options for increasing and maximizing opportunity and participation.

My delegation appreciates the particular focus that the initiative will give to the concerns of developing countries and to the particular circumstances of the small island countries. We also appreciate the consideration that the initiative will give to the rights of women, children, indigenous people and other disadvantaged groups.

In the preparation of the report, we hope full consideration will be given to the need for more enlightened dialogue on new patterns of development cooperation and on more equitable access to global opportunities, especially in the fields of trade, development finance and technology transfer. The initiative should support and complement the ongoing process initiated by the Secretary-General last year for the preparation of an agenda for development.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate my delegation's support for the draft resolution on the United Nations initiative on opportunity and participation. We are pleased to be one of its sponsors. My delegation considers this initiative to be fully supportive of the commitment of the United Nations to world peace, freedom and social and economic development, as enshrined in the Charter.

The draft resolution has benefited greatly from the wide consultations that have been undertaken by the delegation of Papua New Guinea in a true spirit of cooperation and compromise, and with the interests of all countries in mind. I hope that this initiative will be a source of inspiration to all of us; my delegation urges all Member States to join in adopting it by consensus.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.